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AN INDICTMENT OF THE BRITISH MONARCHY.

BY ANGLO-AMERICAN.

It is difficult, just at first, to associate an Englishman with self-depreciation. The difficulty, to be sure, is more logical than real; and logic, a poor key to anything, is no key at all to the contradictions and inconsistencies of national character. With whatever surprise, one soon comes to accept it as a fact that, with the natural hardihood of their stock, there mingles, in the English, oddly and insistentlly, this bias towards a sort of national despondency, this element of self-depreciation. It is a fact no more explicable by formula than the political cynicism with which Americans overlay, but cannot conceal, their profound and incurable altruism. The trait would seem to be of recent growth, and yet already confirmed enough to be called a habit. One can imagine, at any rate, nothing more alien to the spirit of Elizabethan England, for instance; nothing, too, of which the aristocratic England that warred down Napoleon was less conscious.

It came in with democracy; but democracy was not the cause of it, or, at least, not the sole cause. In part, one might trace it to age, and the weariness that age thinks it almost indecent not to feel, or, at any rate, not to parade. In part, again, it is the bastard offspring of that dreamy Cosmopolitanism which so

absurdly gilded the cold philosophy of the Manchester school of politics. But I should be inclined more than anything else to ascribe it to the passing of that halcyon age of monopoly in which England, thanks to the play of fortune and the sterling capacities of her people, became "the workshop of the world." A monopolist who has lost his monopoly, finds himself singularly unequal to the stress of competitive conditions. The change from the old to the new takes on the sweep of a revolution. The whole mental focus has to be readjusted, the quiet jog-trot of former years must be transformed on the instant into a break-neck gallop, science displaces the rule of thumb, a devouring alertness supplants the easy, hackneyed routine. The very qualities that monopoly fosters are precisely those that competition begins by discarding. The peculiarities of the English temperament made the monopolistic "atmosphere" excessively congenial, and therefore excessively hard to grow out of. There arose in consequence, first, a resentful amazement that any change should be necessary, and then a despairing wail of acknowledgment that England was unprepared, that she had reposed too long and lost thereby her ability to "rough it." The pessimism of the last few years has, perhaps, its main source in that discovery.

But, whatever the cause of it, the fact itself is but too palpable. England, almost alone among the great Powers, has entered the twentieth century in a spirit of depression and foreboding. In France, for the first time since Sedan, we are witnessing the beginnings of real hope, contentment and confidence. In Germany, the consciousness of a tremendous destiny is still keen and operative, and no domestic complications seem able to diminish that invigorating German sense of being on the crest of the rising wave. Italy feels within her the stirrings of a genuine and lasting *risorgimento*; Russia faces the future with a fervid, patient, almost mystical faith; to America the whole prospect, as usual, is rainbow-hued; even Japan waits and prepares in hope. But in England the "note" is one of self-criticism, of complaint, of discouragement. It is loudest of all in the sphere of commerce and industry, but it is heard in every section of the national life. There is little that they can call their own in which the English any longer place their old implicit trust, unless it be the navy and the colonies. They are canvassing and questioning all things, their habitual systems, their most cherished dogmas; and they are

doing this, not as the Prussians did it after Jena, but with almost hysterical pessimism.

The great thing, however, is, after all, that they are doing it, that there is at this moment a perturbation, almost an upheaval, of the national mind, pointing to what can hardly stop short of a general reorganization. Such a movement always runs to wildness and extremes at this or that point, as Mr. Chamberlain's revolt from Free Trade, a sign of pessimism and a confession of failure in itself, has already shown; and the English are just now more conscious that there are things to be remedied than sure of what remedy to apply. But the fact of this consciousness is the important one. It marks a vast inroad on the comfortable faith that whatever is British must be a law of nature. The present mood of the English is far more in agreement with a doctrine the opposite of that. They are beginning to suspect things simply because they are British. This, at any rate, is the true spirit of reform, and it has led them to the discovery of that blessed word, "Efficiency." Efficiency is now the preoccupation of Englishmen. They look around and find, very truly, that there is hardly a department of the national life where it might not be more utilized. They see their Parliament slipping down almost to the Continental level of incapacity and public indifference; they see an immense falling-off, actually and relatively, in the standard of administration; they see how politics are growing more and more an affair of friends, and of rich friends at that; they see, at a time when science is everything, their educational system made the battleground of theologians; they see the vast domination of privilege and vested interests and nepotism in the army, the consular and diplomatic services; they see, in short, a state where the career is not yet open to talent, where almost every form of inefficiency is condoned so long as it is not too palpably tainted with dishonesty. Among an astonishing number of Englishmen, the sight of all this has aroused something akin to a sense of desperation. An awakening is at hand, has, indeed, already begun, which, however crudely and with whatever mistakes, can only end in a re-adaptation of the national spirit and possibly of the national framework to the new needs of these changing times.

Now, it is a remarkable fact that, while so much else is being criticised and overhauled, the Monarchy remains untouched. The Monarchy lies outside the discussion. The energy of the boldest

reformer does not, even remotely, point towards the Throne. No one dreams of suggesting that there is anything, either in the social or political position and influence of the Crown, that might be altered for the better. The limitation is not one imposed by caution, cowardice or tactical expediency. It is perfectly instinctive and perfectly unconscious; something that every one takes for granted, on which no understanding or agreement is necessary. One may even go farther. Were this movement of regeneration suspected of the ambition to reach out to the Monarchy, that fact alone would irretrievably damn it. One can hardly have a stronger testimony than this to the popularity of the Crown or its fundamental affinity with English instincts. There is no institution of one half its strength in the kingdom. England has always within her borders a certain number of "intellectual" republicans, men whose sympathies are altogether with the republican theory, who are convinced of its superiority in the light of large considerations of national well-being. Yet, these are the very men who, just because they have this detachment and clearness of mind, are the first to see and acknowledge that an English Republic is an impossibility, and that the monarchical form of government is the only one that suits the English temperament.

That immense revival during the last thirty years of the monarchical principle, of which one may, perhaps, take "bossism" in America to be a sort of reflex action, has penetrated nowhere so deeply as among the English people. Indeed, one may say that republicanism in England is to-day simply non-existent, either as a policy or an aspiration. Even the Hyde Park orators of a Sunday evening have dropped it. And yet, as recently as the early seventies, it seemed to have a fighting chance. Men went about speaking of the possibility of a declared Republican Party in Parliament. Sir Charles Dilke stumped the country in a campaign against the expenses of Royalty, and riots and intense excitement everywhere marked his progress. The birth of the Third Republic in France was another factor that reacted powerfully and in an anti-monarchical direction on current English politics. There were debates in the House of Commons of extraordinary violence on the general position of the Monarchy. The question was undoubtedly for awhile "in the air"; many believed that the hour had actually struck. There was no idea of a sudden revolu-

tionary change, but the conviction grew that an English Republic was one of the certainties of the future, and that the manner and moment of its coming might safely be left to the natural play of time. The movement, if one can call it such, soon spluttered out, quenched as much as anything by the almost fatal illness of the Prince of Wales. Its next result was rather to strengthen the Monarchy than weaken it, and the immense quantity of history manufactured during the last thirty years has been of a kind to help and confirm that result. The growth of the Imperialist spirit, focussing as it must on the Crown, the mellow close of Queen Victoria's reign and the half-religious devotion that grew up around her, were two influences of inestimable potency in raising the Monarchy to a height unreached at any previous period in English annals. The Crown to-day finds an unchallenged acceptance. For the overwhelming mass of Englishmen, one might almost say, it has ceased to be an institution and become a law of nature.

To every nation, a central rallying-point, fixed, stable, unaffected by the passing tumult and strife around it, is an asset of supreme political utility. In the mere fact of its permanence and discreet aloofness, there is an invaluable restraint, an assurance of public orderliness and tranquillity. Americans have found this virtue in their Constitution; the English find it in the Monarchy. In both countries, there is, as it were, a guarantee that the foundations are secure, and the fundamental questions of politics and the social fabric already settled. Circumstances have made the fulfilment of this function an almost unconscious act in the British Monarchy; the wearer of the Crown, it is hardly too much to say, finds it automatically fulfilled for him. So far as this, the constitutional, side of his position goes, a bad English King is almost as unthinkable as a bad Speaker of the House of Commons. It would argue an astonishing incapacity if the Monarchy were to lose, or even jeopardize, its strength as a presiding object of agreement. It attained to the fulness of that strength under Queen Victoria; the last thirty years of her reign confirmed and consolidated it—and thirty years may be a long time even in the history of such an Empire as Great Britain's. This virtue, then, of the Monarchy, in marking limits, in creating and maintaining a zone of calm, in withdrawing itself from the lower planes of discussion and strife, is a virtue for which full credit should be

given. It is a negative virtue, no doubt, but, for all that, indispensable from the standpoint of public peace as well as of self-interest. Those institutions that resist the least, usually live the longest.

But it is not by any sober balancing of the expediencies that the attitude of the English people towards the Crown is to be gauged. That attitude is determined, as most things are determined, by forces that have little to do with reason. Among these forces, the first and most pervasive is the power and the charm of ancient habit, buttressed by centuries of steady, unexciting, above all prosperous, history. No influence responds so precisely to the peculiarities of the British character as this, just as no influence has done more to make that character what it is. "Whatever is, is right" is a maxim to which the English subscribe with instinctive unanimity. It may be a proof of their political genius that they do so, or it may not; but, whether it be a final advantage or disadvantage, there can be no question that the bent of mind which inclines so naturally towards a reverence for the thing that is, works powerfully for an uncritical acceptance of the Crown.

Again, the common concomitants of a Monarchy—its social pre-eminence and glitter, the pageantry of it, its variegated appeal to the smaller ambitions—all act on the British senses with singular effect. And, curiously enough, this effect is widened and intensified with the years. It used to be felt only by "the town," by a narrow, exclusive, really patrician, circle; it has now a range that embraces the whole kingdom. Democracy and mechanism, while destroying the naturalness of Monarchy, have multiplied its popular attractiveness by bringing thousands within its radius of influence, where formerly there were tens. The more artificial it becomes, the greater seem to be the possibilities of its contact with ordinary men and women. The Tzar, for example, has not one tithe of the social power over Russia that King Edward exercises over his subjects in the British Isles. There is thus a vast increase in the number of those who have a personal interest in the Monarchy, who have watched a state pageant, have been in the presence of the Royal Family, and can boast an acquaintance, even if only second-hand and momentary, with the Court. Politically, the direct power of the British Crown is largely a convention; socially, it was never so much a reality,

never so extensive and so intensive, as to-day. You have but to talk with the wife of a provincial mayor, after a Royal visit to her town, to know this.

Is this social influence of the Crown a good or a bad thing? That depends, of course, on how it is wielded. It may be the most powerful of all instruments for social well-being; it may also be very much the reverse. I am afraid that, in England's case, the conclusion of any thorough and dispassionate inquirer must be that the Monarchy militates against national efficiency, emphasizes and encourages what is least desirable in the national character, and perpetuates an atmosphere which is fatal to the realization of the country's best self. This conclusion is not based, or at any rate not entirely, on the actions or personality of the present wearer of the English Crown. The factors, or most of them, that have gone to its making are inherent in the general position and workings of Monarchy in England, in the spirit it engenders, the system it supports and is supported by, and the kind of example it sets. These might very well be considered apart altogether from King Edward VII. and the subordinate members of the Royal Family. At the same time, there is no reason to regard King Edward's mode of life as other than typical of what England expects of, likes in, and will probably continue to receive from, her Monarch. A diary of his doings might, therefore, throw a certain light on the manner in which Royalty discharges its functions, with the concurrence and even applause of the British nation. You would find in it, of course, an infinity of court ceremonies, levees, investitures, balls and "drawing-rooms," state visits to provincial towns and neighboring countries, reviews, receptions and so on. You would also find a considerable chapter given up to sport, chiefly horse-racing, with a few sections devoted to yachting, pheasant and partridge shooting and attendance at polo matches. "Bridge" and the theatres would be not infrequent items, and they might be indefinitely supplemented by the gossip of the London clubs. You would also happen upon a vast amount of popular charity-mongering—the opening of hospital wings, the endowment of beds, the inauguration of charity bazars, the patronage of this cure for consumption, of that for lupus, of the other for cancer, and subscriptions innumerable. On a somewhat less elaborate scale, you would hear of the Prince and Princess of Wales doing precisely the same sort

of thing. One hardly knows which to pity the more—Royalty, which is condemned to so futile an existence, or the nation, which can find in such an existence the highest expression of Royalty.

I do not wish to criticise the Royal turn for philanthropy, though I believe it to be utterly unscientific and am doubtful whether its influence has not worked for harm rather than good. Charity, at any rate, is the most public and persistent of the Royal activities and the direction of all others in which the Royal impulse has been most strongly felt. There is no easier access to a title than a thumping donation to some philanthropic scheme in which the King or the Queen has shown interest; indeed, one is tempted at times to regard the raising of money, the beating up of subscriptions, as one of the chief functions of the Royal office. But charity, after all, is but a palliative. The relief of distress, even when the distress is real and the relief intelligent, is not so important as the prevention of distress; and the engrossment of Royalty in the less vital work means the sacrifice of the only agencies that promise permanent results. Were education, for instance, to become as fashionable and as much an object of Royal solicitude as the London hospitals, there would be little need to talk of England's "decline." But the claims of education ceased, apparently, to interest the English Monarchy with the close of the reign of King Edward VI. The Seventh of that name, like all his recent predecessors, not only ignores them himself but causes others to ignore them, too; for, if the support of Royalty spells abundance, it is equally true that the neglect of Royalty spells inanition. An educational enthusiast on the Throne of England, or one who was willing even to affect enthusiasm, might in a generation recover for his country all that her contempt for knowledge is now putting in jeopardy. As things are, it must remain a terrible hiatus in the usefulness of the English Monarchy that the greatest of England's needs, the starving of which means nothing less than national defeat, should receive from it not the least assistance. And if the Monarchy does nothing for education, it does even less for art and letters, its ventures in both spheres having the trail of an unmitigated *bourgeoisie* all over them. You often hear it said in London, that there is no surer testimony to an artist's or a writer's commonplace respectability than that he should have won the approval of Royalty. The plain fact is that the English Monarchy is not an intellectual force. No

stimulus radiates from it; it patronizes naturally the wrong thing. England's instinct for mediocrity is already terribly keen, and stands in not the slightest need of the Royal imprimatur. It is, therefore, a double misfortune that the Monarchy, like the whole kingdom, should live contentedly in an atmosphere of mental sluggishness; that taste and thought and achievement should all be compressed by its influence into the obvious, the objectionably unobjectionable moulds; that the Court should hang like an oppressive fog to blind and stifle every free intellectual breeze.

But are these more or less indirect and intangible ways the only ways in which the Monarchy works to the detriment of England? I think an increasing number of Englishmen are coming to see that the Monarchy does an even greater disservice to the country by directly handicapping efficiency. The Monarch himself cannot, in the ordinary sense, be efficient. He can be efficient, in the English sense, by giving no political trouble, by cultivating a graceful condescension, and by publicly parading himself from time to time with full ceremonial circumstance. The negativeness of this standard is really made imperative by the Royal training. Duties of a more positive kind he has been carefully unfitted for. He is the master of no trade. He may have a smattering of the navy or of the army, but in each case it is no more than a smattering, easily forgotten in the excruciating round of "functions." His education has been too scattered to be at any point complete, and his interests too dispersed and embryonic to be capable of concentration. He has had "Constitutionalism" dinned into his princely ears from childhood; and, by the time he reaches the Throne, he has unlearned the very idea of personal initiative in the things that really matter. Incidentally, what can be more disheartening than the knowledge that the goal of all this educational paraphernalia is the trained suppression of a figurehead, who may reign but cannot govern, and who must be very careful about even interfering? The Monarch drifts, accordingly, into the decorative effects of his position, signs mechanically whatever is put before him, becomes an authority on medals and precedence and uniforms, indulges in a little easy philanthropy or frankly gives himself up to "pleasure."

The example of such a life is not, and cannot be, one that makes for efficiency. It is, indeed, a fundamental drawback to the theory of a hereditary Monarchy that efficiency in the Monarch can at

best be but an accident; and the chances of such an accident happening in England are, as I have tried to explain, discounted both by the manner of the princely up-bringing and the conventional impotence, or rather the conventional authority and the real impotence, of the Crown. No one in England seems to think of King Edward as a ruler. The idea of Royalty taking a lead in anything, of insisting, let us say, on the reorganization of the War Office or on straight shooting in the Navy, has apparently dropped from the English consciousness. Of all the compromises, and forms and conventions and tacit understandings that contribute to the workings of the British system, the Monarch is really the greatest—nominally everything, in truth next to nothing. To the prescribed and traditional inefficiency of the King, there should therefore be added, as an influence at least equally subtle and deleterious in its effect, the essential falsity of his position and the confusion, almost inversion, of standards involved in it. That a Monarch who is practically nothing should be made to appear as though he were everything, may be one of the reasonable insincerities that make government possible. The trouble begins when he is honored and kowtowed to as though he really were everything, and deserved to be more. Such a habit puts a premium on make-believe, and propagates the fatal notions that the office makes the man and that birth and worth must necessarily go together. It confirms, in other words, that caste system and that caste spirit which are the "note" of British administration and the British social atmosphere.

Of the workings of this system and spirit much might be written. Its influence is to be seen most clearly, perhaps, in the sphere of government. Monarchy and aristocracy gravitate naturally towards one another, and in a country like England, where the aristocracy forms an hereditary legislature, the alliance is not only particularly close but has a direct and especial bearing on the conduct of public affairs. It means, roughly, that the peerage and its off-shoots, the great landowning and county families, form a sort of governing class, come to look upon public office as almost a birthright, and regard themselves as naturally entitled to a predominant share in the administration. They set the tone, that is, not only of social but of official England. They make politics an affair of friends and restrict its highest honors to themselves and the comparatively limited number of wealthy persons of the

mercantile, manufacturing and professional classes who are admitted into what is called "society." Outsiders, like Disraeli and John Bright and Mr. Chamberlain, may from time to time force their way into the charmed circle by sheer weight of genius, by profoundly impressing their personality upon the masses of their countrymen. But such instances are rare, and tend, if anything, to become rarer. It remains substantially true that a man without birth or wealth or leisure, a man who has not won the approbation of the West End and is not congenial to the Court, cannot, however gifted, hope to play a really foremost part in English affairs. He has, as it were, to pass an unconscious examination, in which his capacity and fitness for the post he aspires to hardly figures at all.

The consequence is that in every British Ministry you find a wholly disproportionate number of places reserved for the aristocracy, whose title to them is based solely on the non-essentials of birth, manners and social position. Nobody pretends they are the best men for the offices they fill, or that the country receives from them anything like full value for its money. They are there simply because they are born in the purple and cannot be got rid of. These privileged administrators, from their long and intimate association with the Court, are peculiarly susceptible to the Royal example. If they find a serious Monarchy, bent on efficiency, setting the fashion of hard work, they may, so far as their abilities and intelligence will allow them, be efficient themselves. But when they find a Monarchy, like the English Monarchy, which, without being absolutely frivolous, is remarkably without keenness or vigor of any sort, they will inevitably, except in the exceptional cases, become themselves perfunctory and half-hearted. Given an aristocracy of office-holders, placed far nearer the Court than the people, and only the example and pressure of the King himself can key them up. We may from time to time be forced to smile at the Kaiser, or if not at the man himself, then at some odd way he has of showing himself. But there is a quickening salt, even in his most characteristic exaggerations, that savors the whole German body politic. He at least is keen, alert and thorough, and with the force to insist that those below him shall be equally so. His subjects respect him even when they smile; they feel his breeziness and are stimulated by it; they share and reciprocate the thrill and stir of his intense spirit. What

might not a pinch of his infectious and vitalizing energy do for England? But to expect such a tingling personality, or indeed a personality of any kind, on the English Throne, is like expecting decency from Tammany. "Tact," "amiability," "graciousness," are the qualities in which the English Monarchy has buried itself. So be it; but the reflex action of these qualities on public administration seems hardly of the happiest. In this matter, indeed, the Monarchy does a double disservice. It begins by restricting the largest share of the national business to a set of wealthy, titled, condescending amateurs; and it goes on to confirm their natural characteristics by its own example of resplendent indolence. And what the conjunction of these two influences may mean to the welfare of the state, can be learned from the appalling report of the Commission of Inquiry into the conduct of the Boer War.

Nor is it in this matter of public administration alone that the Monarchy, by its disregard of merit, creates and popularizes a confusion of false and therefore of demoralizing values. The whole system of honors, of which nothing can prevent the Monarchy from being regarded as the source, sets efficiency equally at defiance. To such a being as an Englishman, in such a world as England, a title will always carry with it an implication of superiority, will command deference, will raise its wearer above the ranks of average humanity. It will do this apart altogether from the grounds on which the title has been given. Nevertheless, the spectacle of wealth buying what honors it pleases, of shrewd donations to a Royal charity being rewarded with a peerage, of baronetcies purchased by a check to the party funds, of all the wretched huckstering and intrigue that graduate the scale of English precedence, is one that works with a subtle and degrading perniciousness. Granted that, to the common run of Englishmen, still more of Englishwomen, a lord is simply and naturally a lord, with an ordained and prescriptive right to his position and all that goes with it, there will still be those who will hark back a little further, inquire into the fundamental rights and wrongs of the matter, and work down to the unescapable conclusion that the system of precedence and honors in England is nothing but a grotesque sham. And for these there remains the alternative of accepting the system, of paying a life-respect to what they know does not deserve it, and so of conceding the one point that simply cannot be conceded without a moral tarnish;

or else of rejecting it, and so condemning themselves to a life of protestant futility. No country, in my opinion, can be in a really healthy condition where such a dilemma is presented to the thinking minority of its citizens. And even the majority who do not think, who are conscious of no such dilemma and accept things more or less at their face value, cannot evade the influence of this caste system and spirit. What is it, at bottom, that makes the English atmosphere so difficult for an American to breathe in freely? It is, I believe, that he feels himself in a country where the dignity of life is lower than in his own; a country where a man born in ordinary circumstances expects, and is expected, to die in ordinary circumstances; where the scope of his efforts is traced beforehand by the accident of position; where he is handicapped in all cases and crushed in most by the superincumbent weight of caste, convention, "good form" and the deadening artificialities of an old society. That unconquerable buoyancy which infects the American air like a sting and challenge, and braces every American with the inspiration that he has a chance in life; that here are open opportunities, unreserved possibilities, no battering at locked doors, no floundering in blank alleys; that here, in short, it is the man himself who makes his career—is something which the English have so utterly lost as to be incapable of realizing it.

I feel sure that if one could follow the workings of the caste system into their uttermost details, one would find that the hopelessness and servility bred by it are responsible for perhaps half the commercial inefficiency and unprogressiveness of England. It makes for stagnation, just as certainly as it makes for that class rancor which gives to English trade-unionism its peculiarly bitter strength. At one point in the social scale, you may find its fruits in the worship of externals and appearances, in an overvaluation of the purely decorative, non-productive elements of life. At another, it will be repressing and circumscribing the ability of the "vulgar" in favor of genteel incompetence; at a third, you will see it spouting in geysers of flunkeyism. Between King Edward VII. on his Royal Throne and the London "floor-walker," who makes you shiver with the abjectness of his bowings and scrapings, the connection of cause and effect may not at first be apparent. It is there, disastrously there, all the same; and the caste spirit is the link. When the Monarchy sets the example of

governing, rewarding, behaving, with a single eye to merit, there is no room and no temptation on the lower strata for slimy servility. When the Royal influence, however, tends palpably in the other direction, it will breed flunkeys as the New Jersey marshes breed mosquitoes.

I do not see how, England being what she is, the caste system, with its enormous disabilities, its poison and its blight, can be uprooted. But it is pretty clear how it can be counteracted and the evil sucked out of it without endangering whatever value it may possess in preserving the little amenities of life. There is no real reason why regeneration should not, in England as in Germany, flow from the top downwards. In this matter, indeed, if the regeneration is to be both permanent and peaceable, there is no use in looking anywhere but at the top. The Monarchy must lead England into the path of efficiency; but, to do so, it must first become efficient itself.

ANGLO-AMERICAN.